U.S. AIR MAIL SPECIAL DELIVERY ISSUES OF 1934-1936

The 16c Great Seal Design

In 1934, the U.S. Post Office recognized a need for a postage stamp that would combine the domestic 6c air mail rate with the 10c special delivery fee to expedite the franking of mail for both of these services. This stamp proposal was approved by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who suggested that the "Great Seal of the United States of America" be employed as the center vignette, surrounded by the type captions of "AIR MAIL, SPECIAL DELIVERY, 16 CENTS and U.S. POSTAGE". Three different 16c Air Mail Special Delivery issues were produced during a ten year printing process and they were the only such stamps issued by the Post Office. The last AMSD issue (16c bicolor) was available at the Philatelic Agency until Aug. 20, 1948.

The design of the AMSD stamp was credited to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who sketched a pencil drawing of this new concept on a piece of scratch paper. The sketch wasn't preserved or photographed and its whereabouts is unknown.

For each of the three different AMSD issues, this exhibit presents a wealth of material, including proofs, specimens, plate types [including the exhibitor's study of the unlisted Type 1 "experimental" varieties and Type 4 "dots and dashes"], printing varieties and other production oddities. The postal history section for each issue illustrates the first day of issue, different rates, cancellations, auxiliary markings and a variety of postal usages to 1948 for both domestic and foreign destinations. The final section displays the 1941-1945 World War II postal history with examples of historical events, unusual usages and censored mail.

Significant AMSD pieces with a difficulty of acquisition are highlighted with a "blue" asterisk symbol. *

Exhibit is divided into four categories — a section for each of the three different stamp issues and one for WWII postal usage.

A. Issue of 1934 — 16c Dark Blue.
1. Pre-production: Trial Proof / Die Proof.
2. Production: Specimen / Printing / Plate Markings / Varieties.
3. Postal Markings: First Day / Cancellations / Auxiliary Markings.
4. Usages on Cover: Domestic / Flights / Foreign Mail.

B. Issue of 1935 — 16c Dark Blue — the Farley Special Printing.
1. Production: Printing / Plate Markings / Varieties.
2. Postal Markings: First Day / Cancellations.
3. Usages on Cover: Domestic / Flights / Foreign Mail.

C. Issue of 1936 — 16c Bicolor — Red and Blue.
1. Pre-production: Die Proof / Design Change.
2. Production: Specimen / Printing / Plate Markings / Varieties.
3. Postal Markings: First Day / Cancellations / Auxiliary Markings.
4. Usages on Cover: Domestic / Flights / Foreign Mail.

D. World War II Postal History: 1941—1945.
1. Historical Events.
2. Unusual Usages.
3. Censored Mail.

Text abbreviations used: AM=Air Mail, AMSD=Air Mail Special Delivery, APO=Army Post Office, FAM=Foreign Air Mail, FDC=First Day Cover, FPO=Fleet Post Office, RRR=Return Receipt Requested, UPU=Universal Postal Union.